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With that introduction to Vietnam in 1961, it was ironic that three years later I was working seventy hours a week in the Pentagon to sneak the country into a war there, and a years after that I was driving roads in Vietnam trying to discover how to avoid losing it. But no more so than what I was doing for most of 1961, which was drafting guidance for nuclear war plans and consulting on the command and control of nuclear weapons. The intense irony of that last was rooted in my horror of the bombing of civilians--since I was a child in World War II--and above all my abhorrence of nuclear weapons like the bomb that was dropped at the end of the war.

When I was eight to ten, before we entered the war, newsreels of the bombing of Warsaw, Stukas strafing refugee families with children on the roads, the destruction of the city center of Rotterdam, above all the London Blitz, represented for me the essence of Nazism. Nothing, not the aggression, blitzkrieg, the prewar persecution of the Jews (I don't remember knowing anything of the extermination program during the war) seemed so purely, incomprehensibly evil as the deliberate bombing of women and children. Not even the concentration camps that, I knew, would already have engulfed my family if we had been in Germany. (We were Jews, though, as my father put it, "not in religion." My mother had become a Christian Scientist and converted my father to it before I was born. My sister, eleven months younger, and I were raised as Christians, in an extremely devout Christian Scientist household, but I knew the Nazis wouldn't be interested in that.)

In grade school after Pearl Harbor we had air raid drills. One day the teacher showed us a film on the London Blitz, and handed out a model of a short, slim, silver-colored incendiary bomb which was used to spread fires. We were told it was a magnesium bomb, whose blaze couldn't be extinguished by water. We had to cover it with sand, to keep oxygen from getting to it. In every room in our school there was a large bucket filled with sand, for this purpose. I take it that this was a way of making us identify with the war effort, like the air raid watchers and wardens on each block, since the likelihood of German or Japanese bombers penetrating to Detroit seems small in retrospect. But the notion of the magnesium bomb made a very strong impression on me. It was uncanny to think of humans designing and dropping on other humans a flaming substance that couldn't easily be extinguished, a particle of which, we were told, would burn through flesh to the bone and wouldn't stop burning even then. It was hard for me to imagine people who were willing to burn children like that. In fact, it still is.

Later the newsreels were of American and British bombers bravely flying through flak to drop their loads on targets in Germany. I don't recall being aware that they were often dropping bombs of the same kind we had handled in school, or substances with similar characteristics of clinging to flesh and burning inextinguishably, white phosphorus and later napalm. We didn't see films of what was happening on the ground under our bombers, or in the firestorms in Hamburg, Dresden or Tokyo. We believed what we were told that our daylight precision bombing with the Norden bombsight was aimed only at war factories and military targets, though some civilians were, inevitably, hit by accident. British leaders

were telling their own public the same thing about British night-time “area” bombing, though that was a total lie. It concealed a deliberate campaign of terror bombing of population, in which the US joined in the later years of bombing Germany and throughout the bombing of Japan. If I had been fully aware how thoroughly we were imitating Nazi practices, especially against Japanese cities, I don’t know how I would have reacted. Perhaps the thoughts that they had started the war and the bombing of cities, that retaliation was fair and necessary, that anything that would help win a war against such demonic foes was justified, would have quieted any concerns I might have had. And the same thoughts might have reassured me about the atomic bombs on Japan, as they did for most Americans, if it hadn’t been for an unusual classroom experience I had had nine or ten months before the war ended..

My social science teacher in the ninth grade at Cranbrook, a private boys’ school in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan where I was a student on full scholarship, was discussing the notion of “cultural lag,” the lag of culture behind technology. The idea was that the development of technology had moved much further and faster in human social-historical evolution than had our institutions of government, our values, our understanding of society and ourselves. Indeed, the very notion of “progress” referred mainly to technology. What had lagged behind, what had developed more slowly or not at all, was our collective wisdom and compassion, and everything that bore on our ability wisely to control and direct technology and the use of technology to dominate other humans.

To illustrate this, our teacher Mr. Patterson posed a potential advance in technology that might be realized soon. It was possible now, he told us, to conceive of a bomb made of U-235, an isotope of uranium, which would have an explosive power 1000 times greater than the largest bombs being used in the war that was then going on. German scientists had discovered six years earlier, in late 1938, that uranium could be split by nuclear fission, in a way that would release immense amounts of energy. Patterson had come across one of several articles that appeared during the war on the possibility of a uranium bomb. These articles reflected the research and speculation of a few years earlier, which was before the possibility became an official secret. The authors of the articles, and readers like Mr. Patterson, didn't know that in the meantime the military practice of "classification" had been applied for the first time in the US to the work of civilian scientists precisely to keep possibilities like this secret.

Our teacher brought this to us as an example of one more possible leap by science and technology ahead of our social institutions. Suppose that one nation or another chose to explore the possibility of making this into a bomb, and succeeded. What would be the probable implications of this for humanity? How would it be used, by humans and states as they were today? Would it be, on balance, bad or good for the world? Would it be a force for peace, or for war and destruction? We were to write a short essay on this, in a week

I recall the conclusions I came to in my paper after thinking about it for a few days. As I remember, everyone in the class had come to much the same opinion. The existence of such a bomb, we each concluded, would be bad news for humanity. Mankind could not handle such a destructive force. It could not control it, safely, appropriately. The power would be "abused": used dangerously and destructively, with terrible consequences. Many



cities would be destroyed entirely, just as the Allies were destroying German cities without atomic bombs at that very time, just as the Germans earlier had done to the center of Rotterdam and had tried their best to do to London. Now only two air forces in the world could do that to a city, and they had to send up to a thousand bombers to do it, one city at a time. With a uranium bomb, one bomb, one bomber, one city.

This conclusion didn't depend mainly on who had the bomb, or how many had it, or who got it first. Although German scientists had done the original science, the problem put to us was not, "What if the Nazis got this first?" nor the implications for the ongoing war. We didn't base our negative assessment on the idea that this would necessarily be a German bomb. It looked like a bad development, on balance, even if democratic countries got it first. It seemed to be a Nazi weapon, in its essence. In effect, it threatened to make Nazis, in moral terms, out of whoever possessed it.

It was just too powerful. Bad enough that bombs already existed that could destroy a whole city block. They were called "block-busters," ten tons of high explosive. Humanity didn't need the prospect of bombs a thousand times more powerful, bombs that could destroy whole cities. Actually, to destroy a large city or metropolitan area with one bomb, you needed to use a fission bomb to trigger a thermonuclear fusion reaction, to get another thousand-fold increase in explosive power. The article that Mr. Patterson had read didn't hint at the fact that American scientists like Edward Teller were already working to create such a two-stage super-bomb, which was first tested ten years later. But if we had known that, it would have made the same conclusion all the more obvious. Such power, sooner or later, would get out of human control.

Neither I nor anyone else in the class had to be a moral genius to reach this conclusion. As we would say now, you didn't have to be a rocket scientist to see this. It

probably helped not to be one. At the time we were thinking about it, before the bomb supposedly ended the war, you would have had to be a nuclear bomb-maker like Teller to miss it. But after we turned in our papers and discussed them in class, it was months before I thought of the issues again. I remember the moment I did.

I remember a hot August afternoon in Detroit, during summer vacation. I was standing on a street-corner downtown, looking at the headlines of the Detroit News in a news-rack. I remember a streetcar rattling by on the tracks as I read. A single American bomb had destroyed a Japanese city. Perhaps alone among all the readers of the headlines that day, I was thinking: I know exactly what that bomb was. It was the uranium bomb we had studied last fall. I thought: "We got it first...And we used it. On a city."

I had a sense of dread, a feeling that something very ominous for humanity had just happened. A feeling, new to me as an American, at fourteen, that my country might have made a terrible mistake. I was glad, like everyone, when the war ended the next week, but it didn't make me think that we had been wrong in class the previous fall, or that my first reaction was wrong on August 6. I remember that I was uneasy, on that first day and in the days ahead, about the tone in Harry Truman's voice on the radio as he exulted over our success in the race for the bomb and its effectiveness over Japan. I was put off by the lack of concern, of a sense of tragedy, of desperation or fear for the future. His enthusiasm meant for me that our leaders didn't have the picture, didn't grasp the significance of the precedent they had set and the ominous implications for the future. And that lack of awareness and concern was itself ominous. It was like being asleep at the wheel of a moving car.

Improbable thoughts, for a 14-year-old American boy the week the war ended? Yes, if he hadn't been in Mr. Patterson's Social Studies class the previous fall. Not many

Americans had. Thus, on August 6, 1945, we who had been in his class were among very few Americans--maybe we were the only ones!--outside the Manhattan Project or the highest levels of the government who had spent a week, or a day, thinking about the future implications of atomic bombs. And something else separated us from all those who first started thinking about that after mid-August. (I'm speaking for myself here, of course, though it's my best memory that no one in our class had been more optimistic in long-run terms than I was. I don't know how they reacted on August 6.) Unlike these others, most Americans, our initial evaluation of the prospects or of the Bomb not been shaped, or biased, by the plausible (though, it turns out, deceptive) appearance and official claim that such a bomb had just won a war for the forces of democracy, a feat that supposedly would otherwise have cost a million American lives. Though studies of opinion at the time have unearthed more widespread dread of the prospects, like mine, than most people remember, it remains true over fifty years later that the predominant feeling of millions of Americans toward the Bomb is what it was then, gratitude that it saved the lives of their husbands or fathers from death in the invasion of Japan.

I sensed almost right away, that hot afternoon, that my own feelings separated me from nearly everyone around me, from my parents and friends and from most Americans. They were not to be mentioned. They could only sound unpatriotic. And in World War II, that was the last way one wanted to sound, or be. These were thoughts to be kept to myself. But I didn't forget them.

The driver asleep at the wheel of a speeding car. That image above was not consciously in my mind on August 6, 1945, though it would have expressed very accurately my apprehension. Nor did it come to my mind 1959 through 1961, as I looked at Top Secret nuclear war plans that appeared to me to foretell catastrophe beyond all human experience in a future we were preparing. Nor did I think of it in 1965 when I watched my superiors in the Johnson Administration launch us on a course of bombing North Vietnam that I (and some of them, I knew) regarded as disastrously misguided; nor in 1969 when I learned that another president was secretly, incredibly, following in the footsteps of his predecessor. In a way it's surprising that that metaphor didn't suggest itself to me consciously in those circumstances at the time--I've come to wonder more recently whether it wasn't there on those occasions beneath the surface of my consciousness--because it expresses perfectly how I came to see and feel about each of those situations in the light of secret information I was learning. Surprising, because that situation had come into my awareness, just eleven months after my first reaction to the news of Hiroshima, not as metaphor but as a reality.

On the Fourth of July, 1946, a hot afternoon on a flat straight road through the cornfields of Iowa, my father fell asleep at the wheel of our car while he was driving our family to Denver. The rest of us were napping, too: my sister Gloria, eleven months younger than I, in the seat next to the driver (she had raced me to that seat after lunch, though it was my turn to be there), my mother and I facing each other in back with our legs outstretched, she sitting upright on the seat behind Gloria, I on the left behind Dad, sitting on suitcases on the floor. My father, after his eyes closed, went off the road long enough to hit a sidewall over a culvert that sheared off the right side of the car, killing my mother and sister.

I was in a coma for thirty-six hours from a concussion on my left forehead. My right leg was broken just above the knee. My father, as a Christian Scientist, didn't want my leg treated medically and it began to set crookedly, but my mother's relatives arriving in Des Moines from Denver insisted on taking me back to a hospital in Denver where a surgeon re-broke the fracture and set it. I was in the hospital for several months in a cast above my waist. My father returned to Detroit within a few days, to go back to work, and I didn't see him again till I returned to school in the fall on crutches. I was visited daily in the hospital by my mother's relatives, who I had not known very well before.. but my immediate family had suddenly disappeared, in the blink of an eye one might say, two of them never to return. Above all, I had lost my mother, who had been the source of all meaning and approval in my life, the closest relationship I ever had with anyone except my wife Patricia the last thirty years.

Very often in my life others around me have regarded my concern with the possibility of catastrophe and the problem of averting it, my preoccupation with understanding the circumstances that led to past catastrophes and how future ones might be prevented, as obsessive and exaggerated. I can't quarrel (nor would Patricia) with the word obsessive; there's no question that I've spent an unusual part of my life preoccupied with these dark matters (which has not always been easy for my wife to live with). But exaggerated? I don't think so. Disasters, a long stream of them, really did follow from our Vietnam involvement, not less bad than I repeatedly foresaw; and if ones I warned of that would have been still much worse did not come to pass, new information that has emerged in recent decades has convinced me all the more that their possibility was real, not at all

exaggerated. Increasingly I think they were averted--in ways that are the subject of this narrative--by a combination of luck and the efforts of many people, whose concern and actions were not at all misdirected. (I would say exactly the same for the fact that more Hiroshimas and Nagasakis have not yet occurred, perhaps a thousand times over and a thousand-fold greater. But that is a subject for a different book). Not until recent years--from discussions with Margaret Brenman-Gibson and the writings of Robert Lifton--did I ever consciously connect my experience of "the accident" with my recurrent preoccupation with understanding, giving warning and preventing catastrophe: in particular, the deliberate or inadvertent slaughter of civilians, of women and children. But if it's true that it was that traumatic experience that opened me to awareness of the real possibility of such human disasters, and how they could be brought about inadvertently even by authorities who (like my father) had otherwise earned trust, respect and even love, I regard that awareness as a benefit, not a distortion. I see it as, perhaps, a sharpened sensibility to a real danger, to be made the most of by myself and others, like a canary in a mine.

But all of this underlines rather than dispels the irony to which I pointed at the beginning of this chapter, that on the way to becoming an antiwar and antinuclear activist in the middle of my life, I participated directly in a war that generated an increasing incidence of atrocities, on the ground as well as from the air, and even before that *How could I* have joined that; and why did it take me so long to see the wrongness of it? And how could I, before that, have found myself drafting guidance for war plans that included the possibility, in some circumstances, of launching thermonuclear weapons against cities? That last activity is only to be alluded to in this book, but the answers to both questions have much in common, and the answer to the second is part of the answer to the first. Once again, to fill in more of my experience before 1964 is to re-raise these questions even as it may begin to answer them.

The basic element shared by the answers to both questions is that I had become in my late teens, along with many other Americans, a Cold Warrior. This was not because I had grown up as a conservative. I was a Cold War Democrat. A liberal Democrat, who revered Franklin Roosevelt for his role in the New Deal and in World War II and who believed in the cause of unions and of civil rights. In fact, I majored in economics at Harvard with a specialty in labor, with the intention of being a labor organizer or a union economist. My half-brother Harry, eleven years older and my hero, had influenced me in this direction by giving me a relatively radical economics textbook for Christmas in my junior year in high-school, and interesting me in the history of the labor movement. Harry had been radicalized in the Depression; he had left high-school at one point to join migrant farm-workers.

He also launched me on my first research project, by telling me that an account I showed him in Life Magazine by Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., of the Memorial Day Massacre during the Republic Steel strike in 1938, was full of hot air. He said there was no evidence at all for Schlesinger's assertion--in an early Cold War polemic on "The American Communist"--that the killing of eleven strikers and family members by Republic Steel guards and police following a Memorial Day picnic near the plant had been planned and provoked by Communist agitators.

To see who was right--could a Harvard historian be wrong?--I looked up old issues of Life, Time and Newsweek in the school library. I discovered my brother's version was thoroughly supported by their contemporary accounts of the incident and of the subsequent hearings by the LaFollette Committee. In the course of my research I became fascinated by

the turbulence of the labor movement in 1938, when the UAW and the CIO were being organized. I couldn't stop reading, or following the dramatic pictures in *Life* of Walter Reuther being beaten in "The Battle of the Overpass" at the Ford River Rouge plant, and the occupation of auto factories by sit-down strikers in Flint. The environs of my home-town of Detroit, the "Arsenal of Democracy" during World War II, had been a domestic battleground of the labor movement just a few years before that.

By the time I finished the economics textbook my brother had given me and John Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath* and *In Dubious Battle*, I had decided on a career in the movement as a union economist or labor organizer. Reuther was my new hero, and I couldn't wait to join the United Auto Workers and work in an auto plant the next summer, between high school and college. I needed my father's authorization to join the union at 17. He was a Republican and rather anti-union, a source of many fights with my brother, but he gave it.

The fathers of many of the students at Cranbrook were auto corporation executives from Bloomfield Hills who had been on the other side of those particular organizing battles, and my invitation to some of my classmates that spring to attend with me a rally in Detroit for Henry Wallace's presidential campaign attracted some attention from their families. The entry for me in the humorous predictions about each member of the class in the graduation edition of the school paper, "Where will they be ten years from now?" was: "Worker's Wit in the American edition of *Pravda*, or Labor Secretary for President Henry Wallace." Somehow this entry did not, apparently, find its way into the FBI background



checks for my various clearances in later years.<sup>1</sup>

I had just won a four-year Pepsi Cola Scholarship to college--a forerunner to the Ford Merit Scholarships, which was later administered by the same team--in a national competition sponsored by the Pepsi Cola Corporation. On the basis of two SAT's, two students from each state were granted full tuition plus living and travel expenses to any college of their choice. I chose Harvard, which I'd heard had a good economics department, including two professors famous in the field of labor economics.

But already by the fall of 1948, with the Berlin blockade and US airlift underway, I had begun to have misgivings about Henry Wallace's attitude toward the Soviet Union; so much so that on election day I passed out leaflets near polling booths in Boston, as near as we were allowed to be, for the Progressive Party's candidate for the Senate (who also happened to have Democratic endorsement) rather than for Wallace himself, and I was very elated, as well as amazed, when Truman won. My awareness of postwar foreign policy didn't begin much before the Truman Doctrine, which came in same junior year of high-school as my interest in the labor struggle. My brother was sympathetic to Russia and skeptical about Truman's intentions and his hostility to the Soviet Union. But as I followed the news in subsequent years about the Communist coup in Czechoslovakia, the Stalinist regimes and political trials in Russia and East Europe, the Berlin blockade--just as I graduated from high school-- and later the North Korean attack, then uprisings in East

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<sup>1</sup> The first item was a reference to a weekly humor column I had written anonymously for the school paper for several years. I had just been unveiled as the author of that column, which was popular for its irreverence toward school authorities. Revelation of that secret just before graduation led to a class honor I prized above all others, being voted "third most humorous" in my class. The two ahead of me were extremely funny.

I can still be quite funny in the right mood, but there isn't much humor in this book. Sorry.

Europe, official U.S. Government interpretations came increasingly to seem to me more plausible and reliable than those of, in a word, my brother. Much as I listened to him on most things, I privately came to doubt his defense of Soviet foreign policy. I felt his prewar reflexes were betraying him into an implausible and apologetic stand toward Stalin's actions.

I wish now that I had been exposed to a broader range of interpretations, allowing for great skepticism toward both sides. But in the absence of that I came gradually to accept all the Cold War premises, which linked nearly every "crisis" ultimately to our confrontation with the Soviet Union, and identified that with the challenge we had faced before and during World War II. Perhaps the basic premise was an equation of Stalin to Hitler, in their threat to freedom worldwide and directly to West Europe and America, and in the need to confront them with military preparedness, vigilance, and a readiness for collective defense.

I was beginning to see myself, as I did for many years afterwards, as a Truman Democrat: liberal on domestic matters, but realistic and tough, though measured, in confronting the Soviet Union. I admired Truman's action in sending bombers filled with coal and food to resupply the people in Berlin, and his response to what looked like naked aggression in Korea. And I admired his decision to keep Korea a limited war, rejecting General MacArthur's recommendations to expand the war to China and to use nuclear weapons. Believing in the policy, I was prepared to go to Korea myself, though I had no eagerness for it. I had gotten engaged in the fall of my junior year at Harvard, to Carol Cummings, a Radcliffe sophomore who was nineteen like me. It was about the same time that Marines were surrounded at the Chosin Reservoir and fought their way out. I expected to be called up by the draft no later than the end of the school year, so over Christmas

vacation I proposed to her that we get married between terms, so we would have a few months together before I went

A month after our marriage in February, 1951, a draft exam was instituted which permitted me and all our friends to be deferred till we finished college. I was happy to take advantage of that, and when I won a Woodrow Wilson Fellowship for a year of graduate study at Cambridge University I got a further deferment. But I took it for granted that I wouldn't try to extend my deferment beyond that year. Most of my friends chose instead to go to Law School, but I felt grateful for having had the deferments that permitted me to take advantage of the fellowship abroad, and since others, presumably, had to go in my place and the Korean Emergency was still on, I felt it was past time for me to do my duty.

Still, most of my friends and professors were very surprised when I applied for the Officers' Candidate Course in the Marine Corps. I didn't seem like the type. My interests were almost entirely intellectual, and I wasn't any kind of an athlete. (Most of my fellow officer candidates were varsity athletes--I had never met a member of a varsity team at Harvard--and many had majored in PE, Physical Education).

One of my professors, Wassily Leontief, offered to get me a commission in the Air Force in the new mathematical field of linear programming, but that sounded too much like the academic work in economics I expected to be doing for the rest of my life. The Marines would be something different, a lot different. They alone offered a reserve officer's tour of just two years, which was an incentive; but nobody joins the Marines just because it has a shorter tour. (There was a reason they needed to offer that incentive). My main reason was a special one. My wife's father was a career Marine colonel who had retired after the war with the rank of brigadier general. She had fond memories of growing up on Marine bases; her older brother had left Yale to enlist in the Marines and been killed on Guadalcanal, on

his nineteenth birthday. (My older son and grandson are named after him). I wanted to surprise her with my choice; I thought it would make her happy to go back to a Marine base. It did.

The other reason was one I shared with a lot of Marine recruits, a response to the question I saw once in a recruiting poster: "Are you man enough to be a Marine?" That was something a lot of us wanted to find out. I had spent my youth practicing the piano. My mother was a very good pianist who had started in her teens, too late to become a professional. From the time I was born she was certain that I was destined for the career she would have wanted for herself. For years I went to grade school only in the mornings; my mother had arranged for me to spend the afternoons practicing, eventually six hours a day. I didn't have any time for sports or activities, or playing after school with friends. The same was later at boarding school. There I could only practice four hours a day, so I practiced twelve hours on Saturdays; and on Saturday nights, I couldn't afford to sneak out after hours to town or the nearby girls' school lest I be caught, confined to campus and miss my Sunday piano lesson in Detroit. Although the heroes in the profession I was preparing for were all men, virtuosos like Horowitz and Rubenstein, the apprenticeship for it didn't allow me any time to learn how to be a boy, let alone a man.

For example, even in summer, when I had time to read as well as practice, I wasn't allowed to do anything that might damage my hands. Swimming, even tennis, yes; football or baseball, no. I liked batting a softball at family picnics, but I wasn't allowed to handle a hardball ever. I never did learn to throw one. In my early fifties, when my youngest son was about eight, I bought us a couple of gloves--the first time I'd ever worn one--and looked forward to getting the hang of it. But he got mad when I beamed him on the head a couple of times and he refused to play catch with me any more, even though I offered to get him a helmet.

All that changed after my fifteenth year, not only with the accident in which I lost my mother and her supervision, but with something that happened just two months earlier. She had taken me to a new, more professional piano teacher, who had abruptly dashed the plans for a concert career that had shaped my life since I was born. He said that my technique and musical feeling were good, but that since I had never learned to sight-read, my repertoire was far too limited, and it was too late to catch up. It was an odd judgment in retrospect, and odder still that both of us, my mother as well I, accepted it as decisive, relinquishing in an afternoon a goal that had been the focus of single-minded concentration for a decade. Perhaps he was just being tactful about the ultimate limits of my talent, and perhaps she had begun to develop doubts about that herself, as I had several years earlier. For me it was an incredible, unsought and unimagined reprieve, a kind of governor's pardon from the prospect of eventually failing and disappointing my mother.

The teacher did agree to train me, but only for my own enjoyment, and after the accident I continued at virtually the same rate of practicing as before, in effect in memory of her, for the next two years of high school. But I was no longer headed for a music school like Curtis or Juillard. And in the summers, the first in a decade that I could take off from practicing. I could do whatever I wanted. Looking back, I'm struck that I evidently felt free, in particular, to risk my hands in a way that would have thrown my mother into shock.. It was a sign of an inclination to repair a lost boyhood that may have been a factor, years later, in my choosing to go into the Marines.

In Colorado over the next summers I did some serious rock-climbing. The summer before I went to Harvard I worked the night-shift in the Dodge plant in Hamtramck, Michigan . I was preparing for a possible career with unions, in particular the UAW, which I joined. As a punch press operator, I was running presses that threatened several times a

minute to take off one of my fingers or the rest of a hand; that was something that actually happened on the plant floor every few days, to someone as tired as I was from trying to sleep during the day in August in Detroit with no air-conditioning. (The noise of the presses also gave me a permanent hearing loss in the upper registers). After my first year at Harvard, I spent the summer in rock-climbing and then--to broaden my labor experience--working for a month as a top stacker on a large cattle ranch in Wyoming, stacking damp hay with a pitchfork, which turned my hands into hardened claws. Despite intervening years of sedentary life at Harvard and Cambridge, when I faced the question of how to fulfill my obligation of military service, that work experience had given me some basis for confidence that I might, after all, be man enough to be a Marine. But I did have an interest in finding that out, in demonstrating it to myself, that didn't seem shared by most of my college friends as they faced the draft. That probably was due to my peculiar upbringing.

Although I never became a gun nut, training in the Marines to fire every hand-carried weapon from a .45 to a 50-caliber machine-gun and recoilless rockets gave me another belated satisfaction, since my Christian Scientist parents had never allowed me to handle or own was a toy gun, let alone a real one, or toy soldiers. One of the happiest days of my childhood was spent in the backyard of my one grade-school friend, Myron Poe, deploying his immense collection of lead soldiers on World War I battlefield we constructed, with trenches and barbed wire and bunkers. I couldn't admit that at home. Nevertheless, my family wasn't pacifist, although my grandfather on my father's side was a philosophical anarchist who had emigrated from Russia to America, to escape from the Tsar's draft which had recently been extended to Jews. But my father, born in America, volunteered patriotically for officers' training in 1917, when he was twenty-eight, though he was dropped from the training when the standard for height was raised above his five foot four. His younger brother, Edward Ellsberg, graduated from Annapolis and retired as a rear admiral. His first book, *On the Bottom*, on his raising of the the sunken submarine S-4

as a salvage engineer, was a text in our household on a par with the Bible (though not with the *Science and Health*). Early in 1941 my brother initially tried to register as a political objector--a category the draft board didn't recognize--but when Russia was attacked he volunteered for service. He wanted to go overseas, but he spent the war in the States being trained as a pilot, then as a gunner, bombardier, and navigator. My father was chief structural engineer during the war on the two largest factories in the world under one roof,--Ford Willow Run and the Dodge Chicago plant--the first one designed to build bombers on an assembly line.

Even before the war my brother had taught me to memorize and recite all thirty-three stanzas of *Horatious at the Bridge* when I was ten, and later, after I'd read Lowell Thomas' book on Lawrence of Arabia, he gave me *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom* by T. E. Lawrence as a birthday present. On similar lines I read Percival Christopher Wren's *Beau Geste*, then all of his novels of the French Foreign Legion, twenty or thirty of them. The first French words I ever learned--I remember declaiming them when I gave a book report on my reading in grade school--were "*Aux armes, les Arabes!*" I read somewhere that there is no experience more gratifying than to live out as an adult a childhood fantasy. Twice during my service in the Marines, I used leave time to visit Morocco. It was with my heart pounding that I climbed a ladder in a Foreign Legion fort at Zagora on the edge of the desert, to reach a platform where the tricolore was flying over gun embrasures like those of Fort Zinderneuf.

It's interesting, looking back, how steeped I was, as an American boy growing up in Detroit, in tales of empire, British and French. That was true even before I spent five years in a boarding school named after and modeled on a British public school, with school songs borrowed from Harrow and Eton and Anglican hymns in chapel. During the

war I was especially taken with the exploits of commandos and guerrillas, the French Resistance and the Yugoslav and Soviet partisans, who followed Lawrence's precepts on unconventional warfare whether they had heard of them or not. I spent many afternoons in those years telling my sister tales of our operations behind enemy lines as guerrillas, in which she was my principal subordinate. She especially liked the parts where--since we had to travel light, moving behind enemy lines at night-- we planned very carefully exactly what we would carry.

It can't have been accidental that in Vietnam I was drawn especially close to three or four separate Americans each of whom, I suspect, would secretly have been gratified to be known as the Lawrence of Indochina<sup>i</sup>. <sup>ii</sup> : Edward Lansdale, in particular, but just as much, Lou Conein of the CIA, Frank Scotton of USIA and John Paul Vann of USAID. Each of them, in fact, as agents of empire had a good deal in common with T. E. Lawrence; their fascination with the ways of guerrillas was only one part of this. I wonder whether they all hadn't grown up on the same boys' tales I had. Conein, for example--though he really had parachuted for the OSS into the *maquis* in France and then into northern Vietnam to do liason with the Viet Minh--always claimed when I knew him as a fellow member of the Lansdale team to have joined the French Foreign Legion at the onset of World War II, and that particular claim turned out to be untrue. (I once had lunch with Walter Lippman, as a columnist and author the dean of Establishment commentators on foreign affairs, after the release of the Pentagon Papers. He had been an early critic of the Cold War paradigm, and I asked him why he thought it had been accepted so easily and for so long by most of the foreign policy Establishment. He said



that they had mostly grown up in families that greatly admired the British Empire and had gone to East Coast private schools like Groton (as I had, a Jewish boy like Lippman, on scholarship in the Midwest), modeled on British public schools and inspired by the same values and outlook. He said they had felt very proud and privileged, at the close of World War II, to feel they were taking over the world power role and responsibilities of the British.)

Finally, like everyone my age, I grew up on war movies. In the last analysis, like a lot of other Marines, I was recruited into the Marine Corps essentially by a movie, *The Sands of Iwo Jima*, with John Wayne as Sergeant Stryker. Three years later, on a weekend liberty in Puerto Rico during months of maneuvers on the island of Vieques (yes, Vieques), I came across a long line of Marines outside a movie-house in the old part of town. I was surprised, since the marquee and the posters were all in Spanish; in those days there weren't a lot of Hispanics in the Corps. But when I looked more closely at the posters I saw that it was showing *The Sands of Iwo Jima*, with sub-titles. Our troops, on their first day off from jungle training, wanted to remind themselves why they had ever enlisted.

I applied to Marine OCC's when I returned from Cambridge in the summer of 1953, but they didn't have an opening till the spring of 1954, so I went to graduate school in economics at Harvard for a term and a half. Since I'd taken most of the required graduate courses as an undergraduate, I took my Ph.D. oral exams the day before I left for training at Quantico. A few weeks later--it must have been May 8, 1954--we were standing on the drill field in the early morning when our drill instructor Sergeant DeWeese, who had a platinum plate in his skull from a grenade wound in Korea, asked us, "Are your rifles clean?" No one answered this question. He said, "Well, they better be clean, because Dien Bien Phu just fell."

We hadn't seen a newspaper during our first month of boot camp, so that didn't mean a lot to us. Anyway, our rifles were always clean. We'd missed President Eisenhower's announcement of the domino theory on my birthday, April 7, and Vice President Richard Nixon's trial balloon nine days after that, when he said that because "the Vietnamese lack the ability to conduct a war or govern themselves" the US might have to send troops there to prevent a French defeat: "if the government cannot avoid it, the Administration must face up to the situation and dispatch forces."<sup>iii</sup>

But there had been a strong outcry to Nixon's speech, with thousands of letters and telegrams to the White House opposing US intervention in support of French colonialism. The father of my best friend in Denver was a major political supporter of Democratic Senator Ed Johnson of Colorado, who said on the Senate floor: "I am against sending American GI's into the mud and muck of Indochina on a blood-letting spree to perpetuate colonialism and white man's exploitation in Asia." More importantly, the Senate Majority Leader Lyndon Johnson, influenced by his mentor Senator Richard Russell, convinced President Eisenhower that there must be no unilateral US action, without British participation. Prime Minister Winston Churchill and his Foreign Minister Anthony Eden failed to rise to Eisenhower's appeal to regard the challenge posed by Ho Chi Minh as equivalent to that of Hitler in the Rhineland or Munich. So we missed an American invasion of Indochina that would have meant a much, much fiercer war in the North than we ever did experience in South Vietnam, and probably the use of nuclear weapons against China.

The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Radford, and the Chief of Staff of the Air Force favored plans that month to use nuclear weapons in the defense of Dienbienphu, which Richard Nixon and Secretary of State John Foster Dulles also supported, though the other Joint Chiefs did not. Prime Minister Bidault of France later revealed that Dulles had privately offered to transfer to France “three” atomic weapons: two to use in the defense of Dienbienphu, one against China (which was supplying the Viet Minh forces besieging the fortress). He said the offer was turned down, because the first two would endanger French troops, and use against China would involve incalculable risks, presumably from China’s nuclear-armed ally the Soviet Union.

I didn’t know any of this at the time, at Quantico. But DeWeese was just telling us what we already knew, that we Marines were the ready force, the President’s Guard. There may well have been Marines in amphibious ships offshore Indochina at that time. That’s what we had joined up for. If our training had been further along, I would have been glad to go then. All the more if I’d thought that our going in might serve instead of using nuclear weapons. A year or so later, when I was a platoon leader in Camp Lejeune, I was proud to read testimony by the Marine Corps Commandant before Congress that the Marine Corps had three divisions to sacrifice to prevent having to go to nuclear war. That was my idea of a good reason to serve.

Nearly forty years later I was bemused, and appalled, to hear former Senator Robert Kerrey say that as a Navy SEAL he had never been instructed in the rules of land warfare (which bore on the question of whether it would have been a war crime for him to order the

killing of a dozen or more women and children, as a former member of his team accused him of having done in Vietnam in early 1969). I would have said that the immunity of non-combatants from direct attack was at the heart of our code of honor as Marines. It was what distinguished us from Nazi soldiers.

Granted, that principle of Just War had been trampled by the US Air Force and British Bomber Command during World War II. Nevertheless I had no doubt that firebombing of cities or other indiscriminate destruction of population was a war crime, by every previous standard and every norm worth protecting, whether done by Americans, British, Germans or Japanese, whether or not it was in response to aggression. The only rationale for not prosecuting it in the Nuremberg and Tokyo trials was that the Allies had done it on a much larger scale than their enemies. That's what I thought before, during and after my service in the Marines, and what I believe today. It was another reason I'd chosen the Marines over the Air Force. Marines, in the islands in the Pacific and in Korea, fought soldiers, not civilians.

Would I have changed my mind if Nixon's trial balloon that very spring had taken wind, and I had ended up in the rice paddies and jungles of Indochina the next year, after Basic School? I didn't, when I did find myself in those rice paddies a decade later. But the prediction that I would see things differently in conditions like Vietnam was one I heard just before I entered the Marines, and from a former Nazi soldier no less. As a graduate student at Harvard awaiting the opening of my officer-candidate class, I had a tutorial student, a German a few years older than me, who had served briefly in the German army near the end

of the war when he was seventeen. One afternoon we got into a discussion of the Nuremberg and Tokyo trials, which he thought had been very unfair, victor's justice. I was strongly in favor of the proceedings. I supported the Nuremberg Principles, which called for disobedience to clearly illegal orders, and I trusted Justice Jackson's assurance that the US sought to uphold laws of war that would apply to everyone, including ourselves. In terms of ground warfare--the issue of air war raised above didn't come up in our discussion--I brought up the Nazis' policy of reprisals, the taking and killing of hostages as at Lidice, and the practice of torture. I said these were acts for which people were properly punished, in the eyes of most of the world. They were not justified by the fact of war, even if others were doing them, nor by superior orders. And as a matter of fact, the US had not done such things, as a matter of policy, and I was sure we would never do so.

He responded immediately, "That's because you've never fought guerrillas. That's the way you have to fight guerrillas. You'd do it, too."

Neither of us, as I recall this conversation, seemed aware that the US had indeed fought guerrillas for years, in the Philippines at the turn of the century, and had used brutal measures including massacres and widespread torture. What I said then was, "Well, I don't think that's a justification. There are other ways of fighting guerrillas, as a matter of fact, and I don't believe we would ever do that."

He came back to see me the next day. Up to this point he had always seemed somewhat condescending to me, as being not only older and more experienced but as

coming from an older culture. But for once he seemed very serious, and his usual arrogance was gone. He said that he had discussed the subject with a group of other European students who regularly ate lunch together, and he wanted to tell me that he now thought there was something in what I had said. He suspected there was a cultural aspect to military behavior that made it easier for the Germans (not just Nazis) to use brutal methods than it would be for Americans. That went beyond what I had said. But I doubt if there were many Americans my age or older, who grew up during World War II or earlier, who would not have accepted that as self-evident, an article of faith. Still, to hear it confirmed by a young German was unusual, and impressive. He said that this thought troubled him very much; he was going to have to think hard about it.

I already knew that it was not only Germans, or enemies, who breached that military code in ways I never expected Americans systematically to do. As we spoke, our French allies were using American-supplied aircraft and napalm to destroy villages in Indochina in reprisals, and were torturing on a wide scale. And within a few years after Dien Bien Phu they had moved their counter-guerrilla operations to Algeria, where again they used napalm and artillery in populated areas, forced relocations, and tortured on a large scale. I was shocked later in the decade at the revelations-- in books like *La Question* by Henri Alleg and the manifestos of French intellectuals led by Jean-Paul Sartre--of the systematic use of Gestapo-type torture against Algerian independence fighters and their French supporters.

At that point I was just coming out of three years of training and duty as a professional soldier. That may sound presumptuous, but every Marine is encouraged--in

fact, demanded--to think of himself in that way and to be measured by that standard, regardless of the length of his service; it's an axiom that there are no amateur Marines. The fact is that when I read accounts of the dirty war directed by French commanders and carried out by French troops in Algiers, I felt shame as a soldier, a military officer.<sup>iv</sup>

It was the same feeling I'd had, as a Marine with the Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean during the Suez crisis, two or three years earlier, when I saw photographs of what British and French bombers had done to the city of Port Said, at the head of the Suez Canal.. I had actually watched one wave of those bombers, as a large blob on the radarscope of our command ship in the harbor of Alexandria, passing over Port Said to drop its bombs as another wave was hitting Cairo. Later, in French and Italian magazines, I saw pictures of what those bombs had done to the houses and people of Port Said. After my year at Cambridge I had many English friends. I wondered whether they didn't feel ashamed, if they saw those scenes of ruins. I did myself, ashamed for our allies. I felt glad that Americans didn't have to see devastation like that as being the work of our own forces, just as I later felt glad that Americans didn't have to read accounts like those of Alleg and Sartre about Americans. (This was before colonels Anthony Herbert and David Hackworth, the two most decorated Americans serving in Vietnam, came back with just such accounts of torture by Americans, each of them having left the Army in large part in disgust at Army cover-up of this behavior).

In 1956 I was proud as an American and a member of the armed forces that President Eisenhower had forced the British and French to end their Suez adventure. The

fact that it was a president of the opposite party from mine--I strongly preferred Adlai Stevenson in the upcoming election, as I had in the previous one--made the point all the sharper. Nothing could have confirmed for me more dramatically that my country was committed to the principle of opposing aggression, no matter by whom. That was what I believed was involved in our defense of South Korea; it was why I'd felt called on to fulfill my military obligation, it was why I was in the service. Here was the proof, more clearly than a war against Korean Communists could provide, that we stood on principle to uphold international law against aggression, even against our closest allies. Justice Jackson's promise at Nuremberg was being upheld.

I had been just about to leave active duty in the Marines in the summer of 1956 when the prospect arose of conflict in the Mediterranean, in which my battalion would be involved. In preparation for mustering out, I had had to give up my command of a rifle company, which had been, in retrospect, the happiest several months of my life. After a rocky beginning in OCC's, from which I almost washed out, I had learned to become a good Marine infantry officer. I enjoyed the work of a rifle platoon leader and ultimately--a rare opportunity and honor for a first lieutenant in peacetime--command of a rifle company perhaps more than anything else I ever did. I would have been tempted to remain in the Marines as a career if it could have meant a lifetime of troop commands like that--ideally, I thought, at the company or battalion level-- without the prospect of years of staffwork or commands far from field troops.



As it was, I was looking forward to going back to Harvard. Our son, Robert Boyd, had just been born, and just before that I had been awarded a three-year fellowship as Junior Fellow at Harvard, perhaps the most privileged opportunity for independent research in the country. My battalion was due to go to the Mediterranean for six months as the duty battalion afloat with the Sixth Fleet, something I didn't regret missing. But just at this time, there were almost daily warnings of a possible Middle East war arising out of the nationalization of the Suez Canal by Nasser of Egypt. Our battalion received a briefing, classified "Confidential," on its possible involvement in hostilities. One of the Sixth Fleet missions was to assist the evacuation, if necessary, of American citizens from the area of conflict. This might be rejected, for various reasons, by their host country, in which case our battalion might have to make an opposed landing across a beach or at a port to evacuate American tourists or residents who might otherwise, in effect, be hostages or threatened by the hostilities. Or, of course, the battalion might be ordered more directly into combat by the President on one side or the other, or to separate warring forces. The exact role could not be foreseen.

This was a battalion that I had worked with and helped train. For some months I had been an assistant operations officers in charge of training schedules for the whole battalion, but more particularly I had been in charge of discipline and training for a number of platoons and for one of the three rifle companies. I found I couldn't stand the thought that men I'd commanded might be called on to put their training to the test while I watched their performance and fate from Cambridge, Massachusetts. I wired the Commandant of the Marine Corps requesting an extension of my active service till my battalion was released

from duty in the Mediterranean, and when this was granted I informed the Society of Fellows of my decision.

This led, as it happened, to my first investigation for a violation of security. Since I hoped to be reaccepted into the Society when I returned, I didn't want them to think I was withdrawing from their offer frivolously. In my letter explaining my decision, I described my real concern to be with my troops if they experienced combat. I mentioned some of the possibilities that might arise, since after our briefing they had been included in an article in the camp newspaper. Sometime later I was dropped from the advance party exploring facilities and training locations in the Mediterranean because, it turned out, I was being investigated by the Office of Naval Intelligence. A security officer going through our desks in the battalion operations office had come across a carbon I had kept of my letter to the Society. The security office couldn't think of any good reason I would be passing "classified information" on our mission to an outsider. When I brought up the newspaper article in the course of an interrogation lasting several hours, my investigator acknowledged that I couldn't have known that the sergeant who had written that article had been admonished for a security breach. Not a very serious one: "Confidential" was the lowest level of classification, though field Marines rarely saw anything classified at all. The next level, "Secret," was as high as field officers at company or battalion levels were ordinarily cleared for, and I don't recall seeing anything at that level before I went to the Mediterranean, which I did with the battalion after I'd written out an affidavit explaining the reasons for my breach. Ironically, a few months later, I was handling Top Secret documents for the first time. I had hastily been granted a Top Secret clearance, so that I could draw up

operational landing plans for our battalion based on the Top Secret contingency war plans of the Sixth Fleet. At this stage of my life I would have been glad to use my Marine training wherever the President directed; and at the moment, it was unclear to my superiors in the battalion and in the Sixth Fleet whether that might be against Egypt or Israel. (The British and French hadn't yet emerged as belligerents, though there were ominous intelligence indications). While our troopship steamed on orders toward the southeastern corner of the Mediterranean as the crisis heated up, I was assigned to draw up an amphibious landing plan for Haifa, while my partner at the next desk, the other assistant battalion operations officer, made one for Alexandria. In terms of our opposition, it would have gone much worse for us, we suspected, if we had had to use mine.

But what's most noteworthy for me to recall, in this narrative, is how ready I was to see either of those plans implemented, whichever the President chose, quite apart from any sense of the rights and wrongs of the conflict. It so happened that I had come to the conclusion that our allies were very much in the wrong in this case. My battalion commander had asked me to prepare a briefing for our officers on the background of the situation. I read intelligence analyses that had come to our flagship over the summer and did research on the history of the Canal and the relations of Egypt and Britain in the ship's library, which included several encyclopedias. To my surprise, in view of the outrage the British were expressing about Nasser's act, it seemed that the Egyptian government had an unquestionable right to nationalize the Canal, and that any military action to retake possession of it would be clearcut aggression, a simple reassertion of colonialism. That was the conclusion I briefed to the officers on our ship, and they found it so interesting that I was

sent from ship to ship to repeat the lecture to other contingents. But that didn't answer the uncertainty, for any of my hearers or for me, of what US policy would turn out to be, and what role we might be ordered to play. Nor do I remember any of us, including me, being very concerned about that. It was hard to imagine, despite what I had learned for my briefing, to imagine that the US would choose to oppose its NATO allies, in effect taking the same position on the merits as the Soviets, who were supplying arms to the Egyptians and had just made a deal to supplant the US in financing the Aswan Dam. When President Eisenhower chose to do exactly that, I was surprised and proud, that we were opposing a colonialist policy, but I would have been just as proud to have carried out his orders in a different direction. At that time in my life, I cared a great deal about how we fought, but not very much about who we fought, or why: that was for the President to decide. That attitude, a legacy of World War II and the Cold War, stayed with me for another decade. When I finally lost it in 1969, my life changed abruptly.